

**Illinois River Coordinating Council
August 17, 2006 Meeting Minutes
Dickson Mounds Museum, Lewiston**

Call to Order:

Marc Miller, Office of Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

Marc Miller, Office of the Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, called the roll:

Citizen Members

Lee Bunting, Richard Worthen, Michael Reuter, Wendell Shauman and Margaret Frisbie.

State Agency Members

Steve Chard (IDOA), Terry Weldin-Frisch (DCEO), Mike Conlin (DNR), Barbara Stevens (IDOT) and Bruce Yurdin (IEPA)

Ex-Officio Members

Matt Sprenger (US FWS), Gary Loss (for Colonel Duane Gapinski, US ACE – Rock Island District), George Groschen (USGS), William Gradle (USDA – NRCS), Lynn Munson (USDA – FSA) Jim Ross (USDA – FSA) and John Rogner (US FWS).

Members Absent

Daphne Mitchell (Citizen Member), Roy Deda (US ACE- Chicago District), Dean Easter (College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, U of I), Tim Henry (US EPA), John Rogner (US FWS), Commander Paul Mehler (US Coast Guard) and Doug Wilson (USDA – Rural Development).

Approval of Minutes:

Marc Miller asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2006 meeting held at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Wendell Shauman moved to accept and Richard Worthen seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes.

Opening Remarks:

Chairman Quinn announced that this meeting is the first time the IRCC has met in the Spoon River Watershed and he thanked Michael Wiant, Director of Dickson Mounds

Museum, for the use of the facility. He also thanked Michael Reuter and Jason Beverlin for coordinating the tour of The Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve and the Museum. The Illinois River CREP program received \$10 Million dollars in the State budget, for a total of \$100 million Federal and State dollars over the past two years. Chairman Quinn also encouraged participation in It's Our River Day, a celebration of Illinois watersheds through education, recreation, and conservation.

Member Comment Period:

Mike Conlin - IDNR announced that the DNR received a letter from Director Dale Hall, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service saying that they were awarded \$945,000 for the Land Owners Incentive Program. Around \$500,000 of the funding will go to work on private lands in the Lower Sangamon River Valley, while the rest will go towards staffing and expansion of the program to other parts of the state.

Lee Bunting – Citizen Member – reminded the Council about the triple drowning tragedy at Wilmington Dam and encouraged support for the Mayor.

Marc Miller added that Chairman Quinn's office has put together a Dam Safety Initiative covering a wide range of dam issues from warning signs to dam removal. The website for the initiative is www.DamSafe.org.

Michael Reuter – Citizen Member – thanked Chairman Quinn for his continued interest in Emiquon and also announced that Water Resource Development Act passed the Senate. The Peoria Art Guild has an exhibit of Illinois River photos.

Wendell Shauman – Citizen Member mentioned that the Lieutenant Governor's Tent at the Illinois State Fair had a dam model depicting the dangers of dams and he thanked Chairman Quinn for promoting dam safety.

Gary Loss – US ACE said although WRDA has passed the Senate there are still a lot of obstacles before any work can be done. Congress probably will not work on Fiscal Year 07 appropriations until 2007.

Richard Worthen – Citizen Member gave an update on the US EPA's Phase 2 stormwater rules and regulations on non-point sources of pollution in Madison County. The Soil and Water Conservation district is reviewing stormwater permits through the Phase 2 program. This review by the SWCD is turning into a successful program.

Chairman Quinn discussed the Illinois Dam Safety Initiative. This initiative would help to educate the public about dam safety, ensure that adequate warning is posted at dams, and propose changes to encourage the removal and modification of dangerous dams where the dams no longer serve a strong societal purpose or where the dam owner wishes to remove the dam and eliminate the danger to public safety. To provide funding for safety signs and buoys, and other measures, the initiative proposes to close an existing Illinois loophole that allows oil and gas producers to avoid taxes when investing

in drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. The loophole closure will recapture \$10 million in funding to be used to improve public safety.

Native Americans on the Illinois River:

Michael Wiant – Dickson Mounds Museum gave a presentation on the history of the Illinois River Valley and the Native peoples that occupied it in the past. One thing is fundamentally clear: the river changes over time. This is indicated by the nature of the species of the river and records of hydrological changes. Records indicate much of the area near the museum were a series of backwater lakes. These lakes were a significant source of food for the human inhabitants of the area. Records also indicated that humans have inhabited the area for at least 12,000 years. Dickson Mounds Museum and others like it around the state use these records to reconstruct the landscapes of the past and learn how it changed overtime and how the human culture adapted to these changes.

Emiquon Nature Preserve Project:

Jason Beverlin – The Nature Conservancy (TNC) updated the Council on the Emiquon Nature Preserve. TNC is in the process of completing the enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program. This will fund the 30-year easement and some of the restoration work. The easement has been signed and the next step is the planning process with TNC and NRCS. The University of Illinois at Springfield is to build a field station on the property with the purpose of studying Emiquon and doing floodplain research. Those working and studying at the station will also help with some of the restoration work and take part in onsite learning.

Illinois River Monitoring Station at Havana:

David Thomas – Illinois Natural History Survey introduced Greg Sass as the new Director of the Illinois River Monitoring Station at Havana.

Greg Sass said that the monitoring station is part of the long term resource monitoring with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. One of the main missions of the station is to look at Asian carp. They will be studying the fish barriers near Chicago and look at putting in redundant barriers in other parts of the Illinois River Watershed to ensure that the carp do not get into the great lakes. They are also studying the effects the Asian carp have had on the food web of the Illinois River in order to project the effects if the Asian carp make it into the Great Lakes.

RiverWatch:

Vera Bojic – National Great Rivers Research and Education Center gave an update on the RiverWatch program. NGRREC is now the permanent home of RiverWatch. The monitoring season is complete and samples collected during the season should be turned in at the end of August. A quality assurance officer from the Illinois Natural History Survey will analyze 30% of the samples to ensure the data collected by volunteers is of high quality. A strategic plan for the next three years is being created.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:

Lynn Munson – FSA provided an update on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Sign-up for the 2006 CREP acreage began July 17, 2006 and is running as a continual sign-up. They are anticipating accepting 22,000 acres of Federal ground and 14,000 acres of State ground. As of the second week in August 2006 the sign-up had drawn 9,000 Federal acres and 6,000 State acres.

It's Our River Day:

Joanne Skoglund – Friends of the Illinois River gave a presentation on It's Our River Day (IORD). IORD, a celebration of Illinois waterways through education, recreation, and conservation, will be held on September 16, 2006. This year marks the third anniversary of this event with over 60 community events taking place all over the state. These events include river cleanups, kayaking trips, river festivals, educational classes, and a free fishing day along a stretch of the Illinois River. This event not only gives citizens the chance to experience their local watersheds in a different way but also serves as a day to charge their enthusiasm for the protection of waterways and other natural resources. IORD can be found on the web at www.Cleanwater.il.gov.

Spoon River Incentives Program:

William Gradle – NRCS gave an update on the Spoon River Incentives Program. The total number of applications submitted was 67. Fifty-one of the applications submitted were approved. While priority was given to Cedar Creek tributaries, seven of the approved applications were from other parts of the Spoon River Watershed. Some applicants declined funding which decreased the number of contracts that were developed to 41. These 41 contracts total \$1,462,704. Next year they will focus on the Spoon River again.

Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan and Levees:

Gary Loss – US ACE gave a presentation on the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan. The plan is being developed in coordination with the Upper Mississippi River States. The work includes documentation of the existing conditions, formulation and evaluation of alternatives for flood damage reduction, and public involvement efforts. The plan aims for systemic flood damage reduction. Mr. Loss discussed plans A through L as alternative suggestions on how to reduce flood damage. These plans take into consideration the existing level of protection, the effect on the 100 year floodplain (must be less than or equal to one foot), minimizing the water surface profile at Thebes, Illinois, and the ratio of total average annual damages prevented per acre. Conclusions from the studies are systemic flood damage reduction is possible, existing levees will prevent over 95% of the average annual damages, all the reaches involved in the study can be raised less than 1 foot for a 100 year flood, and reconstruction of existing systems may be needed to ensure the current level of flood damage reduction. They are working on making recommendations to the Chief's office.

Asian Carp Symposium:

Mike Conlin – IDNR gave information on the Asian Carp Symposium. The symposium will be held August 22 – 23 at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Peoria, Illinois. It will serve as a continuing education forum focusing on biology, management, research and control of four main species of Asian carp. These species are the Big Head, Silver, Black, and Grass carp.

Macoupin Creek Watershed Restoration Action Strategy:

Dan McCandless – Macoupin County SWCD gave a presentation on the Macoupin Creek Watershed Restoration Action Strategy. In the summer of 2001, a 2-year locally led planning process began. Those involved in the planning process developed the Macoupin Creek Watershed Restoration Action Strategy. All the members of the Council received a copy of the strategy. They are currently trying to locate funding to implement the strategy. Sedimentation and runoff are of great concern to the local people as most of Macoupin County drinking water comes from surface water supplies.

Other Business:

Marc Miller asked Rich Nichols, Executive Director of the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, to speak on the Illinois Urban Manual (IUM). The first edition of the IUM was published in 1995. The original IUM was developed for use as a comprehensive guide for natural resource conservation in urban and developing areas, initially focusing on soil erosion and sediment control. Between 1997 and 2002, several revisions were issued for the IUM. Since 2002, there have been no updates or

revisions to the manual. However, the emergence of the NRDES Phase II regulations have pushed the importance of the manual to the forefront of conservation issues in urban and developing areas. Currently, an effort is underway to re-establish the updating process for the IUM. Mr. Nichols asked the Council to support the efforts to re-establish the updating process and to obtain \$200,000 in funding.

Lee Bunting made a motion for the IRCC to support the efforts to update the IUM and the efforts to obtain \$200,000 in funding. Michael Reuter seconded the motion. The council approved the motion.

Marc Miller mentioned that the Chairman Quinn's Office has had some preliminary discussion with a representative from Hungary on exploring a partnership with the Illinois River and the Danube River. The idea would explore the forming a Sister Rivers partnership and use this partnership as an opportunity to exchange ideas, thoughts and programs. Mr. Miller asked anyone interested in working on a Sister Rivers committee to contact the Chairman Quinn's Office.

The next IRCC meeting will be held in early December in Lake County. A date has yet to be set.

In the future, all IRCC correspondence and meeting notification will use electronic mail to reduce mailing costs. Please provide your e-mail address on the sign-in sheet or to the Chairman Quinn's Office if you want to receive updates and notices on the IRCC.

Public Comment Period:

Terry Ingram, Executive Director of the Eagle Nature Foundation, gave information on upcoming Bald Eagle events. The Fall Eagle Fest is set for October 21 and there will be 5 or 6 Bald Eagle Bus Tours in early 2007. He also mentioned that the potential strip mine near Banner is not a dead idea and urged the Council to continue its efforts to stop the mine.

Ken Fuller, Village President of Banner, thanked Chairman Quinn and his office for helping in the efforts to stop the strip mine. The Lands Unsuitable for Mining Petition has been submitted to IDNR.

Tom Tincer, Executive Director the Heartland Water Resources Council, mentioned that he left some information regarding the sedimentation of the Peoria Lakes on the sign-in table. He encouraged others to get involved and join the Heartland Water Resources Council in the fight to stop sediment flow into Peoria Lakes and to remove sediment from the lakes.

Margaret Frisbie, Executive Director of Friends of the Chicago River, made several announcements. They have opened the Michigan Ave Fish Hotel. This is a pilot urban habitat project that provides fish habitat in non-natural areas. The Chicago River

Museum is open. The museum is in a refurbished bridge house. The 7th annual Flat Water Classic was a success. About 450 people in canoes or kayaks participated and enjoyed the views of Chicago from the river.

Meeting Adjournment:

Chairman Quinn asked for a motion to adjourn. Michael Reuter moved to adjourn the meeting and Lee Bunting seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion. Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 3:16 pm.